

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-88 were originally presented for consideration in this application. Claims 89-103 were added by preliminary amendment. Claim 14 has been canceled. Accordingly, claims 1-13 and 15-103 are currently pending in this application.

The examiner's indication that claims 69-72 contain allowable subject matter is noted with appreciation. Claim 69 has been rewritten in independent form above. It may now be seen that claim 69 and its dependents are in condition for allowance.

The following rejections, objections, and requirements were set forth in the Office Action:

1. Claim 34 is objected to for recitation of a "first wellbore;"
2. Claims 89-91, 95, 96, 102 and 103 are objected to for an incorrect status identifier;
3. Claims 1-16, 23-34, 36-39 and 49-51 stand rejected for lack of enablement under 35 USC §112;
4. Claim 91 is rejected under 35 USC §112 as being indefinite;
5. Claims 1-7, 10-15, 23, 24, 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 49-51, 55-59, 77, 81-83, 89-91, 95, 102 and 103 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,354,375 to Dewey;
6. Claims 1-6, 10, 11, 14-16, 23-25, 29-34, 36-39, 49-51, 55-59, 77, 81-84, 89-91, 95, 102 and 103 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Published Application No. 2002/0112857 of Ohmer, et al.;

7. Claims 1, 9-11, 26, 28, 55, 76-80, 89, 102 and 103 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Published Application No. 2004/0159435 of Pluckeck, et al.;

8. Claims 39 and 84 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Dewey;

9. Claim 84 stands rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Ohmer;

10. Claims 8, 27 and 75 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Pluckeck; and

11. Claim 96 stands rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Dewey or Ohmer in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,561,277 to Algeroy, et al.

Regarding the objection to claim 34, please see page 7, lines 5-7, of the specification wherein the applicants have described that the wellbore 12 in which the wellbore junction 18 is positioned may be a branch wellbore. In independent claim 11 it is recited that a wellbore junction is positioned in a "first wellbore" and in dependent claim 34 it is recited that the "first wellbore" is a branch wellbore. Thus, claim 34 is consistent with the written description, and the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the objection to claim 34.

Regarding the objections to claims 89-91, 95, 96, 102 and 103, the applicants respectfully submit that these claims have only been referred to as "new" in the preliminary amendment filed March 9, 2004 in which the claims were newly added to the applicant and were, therefore, correctly designated as "new." There has been no subsequent designation of these claims as "new." Thus, the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the objections to claims 89-91, 95, 96, 102 and 103.

Regarding the rejections of claims 1-16, 23-34, 36-39 and 49-51 as lacking enablement in the specification, these rejections are respectfully traversed. The presently elected species claims read on FIG. 1, in which is illustrated a wellbore junction 18 having a first passage 22 extending from one opposite end to another of the wellbore junction. A window 20 is formed through a sidewall of the wellbore junction 18. A second passage 60 is in communication with the first passage 22 on a first side of the window 20 (for example, on a lower side of the window), and the passage 60 is in communication with the first passage 22 on a second side of the window 20 (for example, on an upper side of the window).

Therefore, every element and limitation of claim 1 is illustrated and described for an exemplary embodiment of the invention in the specification. In the Office Action it is stated that the specification does not reasonably provide enablement for a second passage that is in communication with a first passage. The applicants respectfully disagree. Clearly, passage 60 is in communication with passage 22.

In the Office Action it is also stated that the figures and description do not describe the subject matter of claim 12. The applicants respectfully disagree. On page 26, lines 1-9, the specification clearly describes a well tool 228 being conveyed through the second passage 60 from the first passage 22 on a first side (for example, an upper side) of the liner string end 46 to the first passage 22 on a second side (for example, a lower side) of the liner string end 46. Therefore, the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejections of claims 1-16, 23-34, 36-39 and 49-51.

Regarding the rejection of claim 91 as being indefinite, this rejection is respectfully traversed. FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of the invention in which a longitudinal bore of the casing string 16 extends through the wellbore junction 18 (which, when interconnected in the casing string, becomes a portion of the casing string). Each of the passages 22, 60 in the wellbore junction 18 is in communication with the casing string bore (the passage 22 is thereby a portion of the casing string bore, see page 8, lines 8-11 of the specification).

The passage 60 permits fluid communication between first and second portions of the casing string bore (in the passage 22) while fluid communication is prevented through the bore between the first and second bore portions. As depicted in FIG. 1, fluid communication is prevented through the passage 22 between first and second longitudinally separated portions of the passage which are in fluid communication with the passage 60. Therefore, all of the elements and limitations of claim 91 are clearly described in the specification and illustrated in the drawings, and the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection of claim 91.

Regarding the anticipation and obviousness rejections, please note that each of the independent claims 1, 11, 55 and 89 has been amended above to make it clear that the wellbore junction of the present invention is interconnected in, and forms a part of, the casing string while the casing string is being installed in the well. In contrast, each of the Dewey, Ohmer and Pluckeck references describes an apparatus which is installed within a casing string after the casing string is already installed in the well.

This means that the flow passages and access through the Dewey, Ohmer and Pluckeck apparatuses are necessarily relatively small compared to those provided by the present invention. Furthermore, the Dewey, Ohmer and Pluckeck apparatuses require a separate time-consuming and expensive operation to install, whereas the present invention can be installed at the same time as the casing string. Thus, the present invention provides significant advantages over the prior apparatuses, and the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the anticipation and obviousness rejections of claims 1-16, 23-34, 36-39, 49-51, 55-59, 75-84, 89-91, 95, 96, 102 and 103.

The examiner is respectfully requested to consider the previously withdrawn claims 17-22, 35, 40-48, 52-54, 60-68, 73, 74, 85-88, 92-92 and 97-101 in the present application, since these claims are dependent from allowable generic claims.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, all of the claims pending in this application are now seen to be in a condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance of claims 1-13 and 15-103 is therefore earnestly solicited.

The examiner is hereby requested to telephone the undersigned attorney of record at (972) 516-0030 if such would expedite the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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